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AUTHOR Johns, Jennifer S.; Panofsky, Carolyn
INSTITUTION Albuquerque Public Schools, NM. Planning, Research and Accountability.
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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of the Albuquerque Public Schools' 1985-86 Homestart Program, funded by Chapter 1 of the Evaluation Consolidation Improvement Act, employed surveys and interviews to address the impact of the programs on the home environment and on the child's experience in school. Data were gathered from Chapter 1 Cognitive Language Development teachers, regular classroom teachers, parents of children in the program, and principals at the 15 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school participating in the program. Each of the groups, families, school principals, classroom teachers, and Chapter 1 teachers provided a different point of view about the Homestart Program. To allow each viewpoint to emerge, findings from each group at each educational level are discussed separately. The final section of the report integrates the four points of view. Although a curtailment of funding for the program was announced midway through the evaluation, the problem was considered unlikely to influence respondents' attitudes toward the intervention, and the program continued to receive widespread support. Its value was recognized, and the need for its expansion was expressed. (RH)

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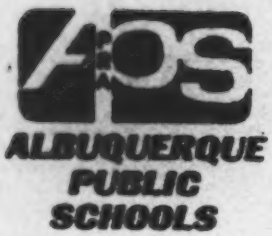
The Homestart Program

Evaluation Report
1985-86



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PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Carol Robinson, Director
Sandra O'Neal, Assistant Director for Testing and Evaluation

Prepared by:

Jennifer S. Johns
Program Evaluation Specialist

Carolyn Panofsky
External Evaluator

Special thanks to Dee Watkins and Jack Kaemper

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Administrative Summary

History

The Homestart Program was initiated in 1983 in the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) in six elementary schools in the Albuquerque High cluster. The program, funded by Chapter 1, focused on children in kindergarten and first grade who were participants in the Chapter 1 Cognitive Language Development (CLD) programs in these schools. Aides, trained as paraprofessionals, worked in conjunction with CLD teachers to plan and implement activities that involved parents and children in tasks to develop cognitive and language skills.

In 1984, the program was expanded to the secondary level. Aides, or Home-School Liaisons, were placed in one middle and one high school in the Albuquerque High cluster to work with Chapter 1 students and their parents. The focus of their work was to develop support in the home for the importance of attendance and school assignments. In the fall of 1985, the Homestart program was further expanded to all of the elementary schools in the Rio Grande High cluster for a total of 15 elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school participating in Homestart in 1985.

Evaluation Design

In the spring of 1986 an evaluation was conducted of the Homestart program at all levels and in both clusters. The evaluation used surveys and interviews to address the impact of the program on the home environment and on the child's experience in school. Data were gathered from CLD teachers and regular classroom teachers, parents of children in the program, and principals at the schools served by Homestart. At the secondary level, data were collected from Chapter 1 teachers and principals.

Results

1. All school personnel who were interviewed believed that establishing contact with families and encouraging parent involvement is an essential ingredient in addressing the educational needs of students in the schools served by Homestart.

2. Elementary school personnel expressed the opinion that the Homestart program was successful in increasing the involvement of many of the parents in their children's education. CLD teachers indicated that parents had been integrated into the school community and had acquired greater skill in interacting both with their children and with the school. Parents reported that after participating in the program they were better able to work with their children on school-related tasks and spent more time than they had previously engaged in activities with their children, like reading books. They also said they spent more time talking about their children's experiences and feelings and believe they now understand their children better. Parents also indicated that their feelings about education, in general, and their children's school, in particular, have improved and that these changes have affected their academic goals for their children.

3. Elementary principals reported that the Homestart program had a positive impact on children's attendance and performance at school. The classroom teachers of participating elementary students substantiated this. They believed that the program helped their neediest students and thereby made it

possible to raise the level at which they conducted classroom instruction. The parents of these children also noted an increase in their children's motivation and interest in school-related activities.

4. Secondary school personnel expressed the opinion that the program provided a vital link with the family which could not be accomplished in any other way. Besides dealing with homework and attendance problems, the aides were able to help solve a variety of problems which were directly or indirectly related to students' experiences in school.

5. It was believed by school personnel that because of the aides' knowledge of the community they were best able to establish the rapport, trust, and respect necessary for a home visitation program to succeed. However, school personnel expressed concern about the classification of the position. They believed that because of the level of responsibility and expertise the position entails, the position should be upgraded.

6. Elementary personnel believed that additional ways should be found to address the more pressing survival issues of the neediest families so that these parents will be able to focus on the educational needs of their children. They commented that families of the neediest children were least likely to participate.

7. There was widespread agreement among those interviewed and surveyed that home visitation programs need to be expanded in order to serve many students who were not being served.

The Homestart Concept

The philosophy of the program follows the "parents as partners" concept which has been stated as follows:

> Parents work as equals in the education of their children. Therefore, educators and parents are resources to each other. Parents have the capacity to rear their own children, but they need support to overcome specific problems that are common to all families. Often most pressing among those problems are limited resources. The major purpose of this program is to provide parents with opportunities to clarify their goals and aspirations and to develop an open, problem-solving approach to child rearing, and at the same time, develop and retain their rights, abilities, and individualities as parents. We must acknowledge and respect their rights. The process that typifies this assumption is interaction between parents and educators. Each acts as a resource to each other.

Review of Research Related to Homestart

The core concept of Homestart, the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education, has played a role in a wide variety of early education projects during the last 20 years. The APS Homestart program was based on these other preschool projects, most notably the Headstart program, though directed to children in kindergarten and first grade. In the history of preschool education, one of the distinguishing features in the planning of Head Start was to emphasize parent involvement in both the daily activities of the center as well as in decision-making. As noted in one historical review of early intervention programs, "This was a major break from past practices in which educated and paid professionals dictated the operation of poverty programs to passive recipients" (Zigler & Berman, 1983).

In the early efforts, intervention usually relied on a "deficit model" in which children from economically disadvantaged homes were seen as "missing" some essential, but undefined, experiences which preschool education would supply. The later efforts, such as Head Start, instead proceeded from a premise of respect for the target child's background, stressing the idea of building on a child's background rather than implying that it was deficient. It was thought that interventions would be more effective if parents were involved because the child's home environment would change, thus extending the impact of the program.

> In fact, preschool programs appear to succeed best when parents participate in the educational process.... In an immediate sense, parent involvement means that the child's environment is affected generally rather than in the one specific context of the preschool program. In terms of lasting program effects, involvement allows parents to perpetuate the benefits of the intervention even after it has formally ceased (Zigler & Berman, 1983).

In the history of early intervention there has, however, been considerable debate about its effectiveness. The methods by which programs were evaluated have been a critical factor in this debate. In the early optimism of the "War on Poverty," the promise of increased IQ scores was embraced by many preschool advocates because IQ was viewed as a predictor of future success in school. Early results supported this optimism, but the long-term results which followed were discouraging. Although scores on intelligence tests showed dramatic increases immediately following program experience, these effects often disappeared after three or four years, so that by the end of the primary grades intervention experiences seemed to have made no difference.

However, several studies demonstrated that motivational factors play a large role in the IQ gains which commonly follow interventions (Zigler, Abelson & Seitz, 1973; Zigler, Abelson, Trickett & Seitz, 1982). When a child's score increased in a pre-post program comparison, the change could be attributed both to a decreased wariness of the foreign test situation, as well as a more global change in the child's orientation to test-like activities, such as those experienced in the preschool setting.

In more recent research, the evaluation focus has shifted away from IQ to factors of more direct relevance both to children's experience as well as to decision-makers' needs (Darlington, Royce, Snipper, Murray & Lazar, 1980). Recent studies have considered school competence, developed abilities, children's attitudes and values, and impact on the family. For the purpose of

school decision-makers, the factor of school competence is of particular importance. In one of the largest and most highly regarded studies of the long-term effects of early intervention programs, school competence was measured by progress through school. "Normal progression through the grades was considered to indicate that children were meeting their school's basic requirements. Two categories of failure to progress normally were coded: assignment to special education classes and retention-in-grade" (Lazar & Darlington, 1982).

This study of eleven programs, chosen for their high quality of research design, found that children who had participated in early intervention programs were half as likely as non-participants to be assigned to special education programs (13% vs. 28%) and one-third less likely to be retained-in-grade (25% vs. 36%). These results indicate that the cost of intervention programs led to significant savings later by reducing the need for costly special education placements and by reducing the number of years needed to complete elementary or secondary schooling. In addition, other follow-up studies of fifteen years or more have found a significantly higher school completion rate (65%) for individuals who participated in early intervention programs as compared with control populations (45%) (Weikart, 1982). In comparing these two groups, participants were found to have lower delinquency rates (22% vs. 43%), higher employment rates (48% vs. 29%), and higher rates of economic self-support (45% vs. 24%).

In an attempt to determine the critical features of early interventions by comparing different program designs, parental involvement has been found to be of central importance. For example, for children who are involved with a group program, such as kindergarten combined with home visits, gains are enhanced to the extent that primary responsibility for the child's development is assumed by the parent rather than the staff. In addition, when parents are involved, younger siblings as well as the target child are benefitted, and the total functioning of the family unit is affected. Parent involvement has been shown to "influence the behavior of the mother not only toward the child but in relation to herself as a competent person capable of improving her own situation" (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).

Another critical factor in program effectiveness is the level of functioning of the family, apart from the program. Families that become involved in parent intervention tend to be those whose life circumstances allow such involvement. Research indicates that "at the most deprived levels, families are so overburdened with the task of survival that they have neither the energy nor the psychological resources necessary to participate in an intervention program involving the regular visit of a stranger to the home" (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). To date, success in dealing with these neediest families has been limited.

However, overall, parent involvement is a critical factor in the success of all program models. In a recent comparative study, a low-cost program of home visits without a component of group activity was shown to be as effective as a high-cost program of intensive group activity without parent involvement (Zigler & Berman, 1983). A general conclusion drawn from many studies is that when parent involvement is combined with a group program, it seems "to serve as a catalyst for sustaining and enhancing the effects of group intervention" (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Thus, there is extensive evidence in support of the Homestart model as it was implemented in APS.

Evaluation Design

In the fall of 1985 it was decided that the Homestart program at the elementary level, and the Home-Liaison program at the secondary level, would be evaluated by the department of Planning, Research, and Accountability (PRA). The evaluation was designed with input from Chapter 1 personnel to address two general issues:

1) the impact of the program on the home environment of project participants; and
2) the impact of the program on the child's experience in school.

It was determined that these questions could best be addressed by collecting data through surveys and interviews of the populations directly affected by the program, that is, the families and the school personnel. Since the elementary program was in 15 schools and the secondary program was in two schools, the evaluation of the elementary Homestart program was much more extensive. At the elementary level, families were interviewed to find out how the program might have changed parent-child interaction in the home. Also, at the elementary level, interviews were conducted with the Homestart children's Chapter 1 CLD teacher and surveys were administered to the regular classroom teachers of these students. These two groups of teachers were each asked to report whether the program had improved the target students' functioning in each classroom setting.

It should be noted that interview data was chosen to address the academic functioning of program participants for several reasons. First, the children in the Homestart program were in kindergarten and first grade and were, therefore, too young for normal achievement testing. The end of first grade is the earliest that their literacy skills could be tested, but it is also the point at which children stop receiving Homestart services. Thus, there was no way to use testing to evaluate the gains of children due to the Homestart intervention. At the same time, considerable research indicates that observations by regular classroom teachers are reliable predictors of children's future success. Therefore, observational data elicited through interviews and surveys were selected to evaluate the impact of the program on the child's school experience.

At both the elementary and secondary levels, principals were interviewed in small groups of four or five people to obtain their perspective on the impact of the Homestart or Home-Liaison program on the functioning of the target students at school. They were asked to indicate if the program enabled participating families to better cope with problems which impede children's progress in school.

At the secondary level, Chapter 1 reading teachers also were interviewed as a group to discover their view of the effectiveness of the Home-Liaison program. Group interviews were selected as an evaluation strategy because they are a valuable data gathering technique for several reasons: 1) they are much less time consuming than individual interviews, and provide more information from a greater number of people in less time; 2) they tend to focus interviewees' attention on major points and to avoid getting into personal concerns; 3) they are a way of discovering consensus, since interviewees comment back and forth to each other, and object if another's comment seems out of line with common perceptions. When a comment seems idiosyncratic, the interviewer asks for others to respond and only widely-shared or widely-acknowledged opinions are reported.

Format of the report

Each of these groups, families, school principals, classroom teachers and Chapter 1 teachers, provide a different point of view about the Homestart program. Yet, all groups address the goals of the evaluation - the impact of Homestart on the child's home and school experiences. The information from each group will be discussed separately to allow each unique viewpoint to emerge. The final section of the report will integrate the four points of view.

The Elementary School Program

Description of the Homestart Program

The Homestart program was implemented in 15 APS elementary schools, six in the Albuquerque High School cluster and nine in the Rio Grande High School cluster. A total of 16 Homestart aides provided services at the 15 schools as shown below.

Table 1. Number of Homestart Aides at Elementary Schools

Schools	Number of Aides
Dolores Gonzales	1.0
East San Jose	1.0
Eugene Field	1.0
Longfellow	1.0
Lowell	1.0
Old Town	1.0
Total for A.H.S Cluster	6.0
Adobe Acres	.5
Armijo	1.0
Atrisco	1.0
Barcelona	1.0
Kit Carson	1.0
Los Padillas	1.0
Mountain View	1.0
Navajo	1.5
Pajarito	1.0
Total for R.G. Cluster	9.0

The Homestart Program offered home visits to kindergarten and first grade children in the Chapter 1 Cognitive Language Development program. Each aide had a caseload of twenty to thirty families and more than 500 families were involved in the Homestart program during the 1985-86 school year.

The focus for the program was "parent/child verbal interaction regarding a cognitive task" such as, looking at children's books or copying and cutting out letters and shapes. The aide shared tasks and activities with the parents and children which supported this focus. Homestart aides, trained as para-professional parent educators, received information from the mother or primary caretaker regarding perceptions of the child's developmental needs. In addition to presenting the tasks and methods for working with the child, the aide also provided information about such related topics as children's growth and development, health care, nutrition, and community resources. The aide visited with each family, either at home or at school, two or three times each month.

Perceptions of Elementary School Principals

Homestart was first implemented in APS in Chapter 1 elementary schools in the Albuquerque High School cluster during the 1983-84 school year. Two years later, in the fall of 1985, Homestart was implemented in the elementary schools of the Rio Grande High School Cluster. Thus, when principals were interviewed early in 1986, some were little more than midway through the start-up year, while others had two and one-half years experience with the program. Because of this difference it was thought that principals from the two clusters might share different concerns about the program. In order to be able to discern possible differences, principals from the two clusters were interviewed separately. Interviews were conducted in a small group format with four or five principals scheduled to meet with the interviewer for one to one and one-half hours. Due to problems of scheduling, a total of seven principals were interviewed in three sessions.

The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured in the sense that direct questions about the program were not asked. Rather, principals were asked to identify and comment on what they thought were strengths and weaknesses of the Homestart program, and what suggestions they would make to improve the program.

During the interviews, each comment was noted in summary form. After all the interviews were completed, the interview data were reviewed to identify any common themes or topics across the separate interviews. Four topics were identified by which all comments were coded into discrete categories. These four topics and the percentage of comments in each category were:

1. need - the value of the program in making a vital connection to the family (12%)
2. impact - the effect of the program in terms of school performance and attendance (29%)
3. personnel - the importance of the Homestart aide to the functioning of the program (14%)
4. design - the definition and status of the program (45%).

These topics varied in terms of the frequency with which they were introduced. Need for the program was commented on least, while program design was commented on the most. This difference in frequency of mention is not a reflection of the importance of the topics but rather a reflection of those topics on which there was a greater range of experience or points of view. Principals also were asked to think in terms of strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as suggestions for improvement. Fifty percent of the responses were in reference to program strengths, 26% in reference to weaknesses, and 24% were further suggestions for the program.

It should be noted that in all interviews it was explicitly mentioned that participants should feel free to express the full range of their views. Several times the interviewer asked for "weaknesses" and emphasized the importance of getting a full picture of principals' perceptions of the program.

In the next section, strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for the program will be discussed in terms of the four topic categories.

Need

All of the principals viewed the program as making a vital connection with the families of the children in the program. Principals agreed that typically it is very difficult for the schools to make contact with these families. They mentioned that parents being served are intimidated or alienated by/from the schools and teachers. Often they are people who were not successful themselves in school. Barriers such as language (i.e. when parents do not speak English) and access (e.g. lacking transportation to the school or a phone) often hinder the development of a family-school connection. When Homestart aides know the community and can speak Spanish, they can initiate a relationship through home visits upon which the teacher and the school can build. Home visits by a person who can readily establish rapport were seen as the key in developing such a relationship.

By making this connection with parents, principals saw Homestart as a way of demonstrating the commitment of the school to the community, and as a way of building the families' faith in the schools. This improved link between home and school was considered especially important for families where there are children, both younger and older than the target child. When there were younger children, the aides attempted to work with and supply materials for all the children. When there was an older child in the same school, the aide also coordinated with the older child's teacher, serving as a liaison for that parent-teacher connection as well.

Impact

Principals mentioned several kinds of impact of the Homestart Program. Impact was described in terms of children, parents and the school. The impact of the program on children was exemplified by withdrawn children becoming more outgoing and improving their academic performance. An older sibling's academic performance also was positively affected when the aide took assignments to the home and explained them to parents, encouraging them to become involved with the older child's school work. In addition, better school attendance distinguished the children in Homestart. At some schools the Homestart children improved sufficiently since being in the program that they were phased out of CLD classes and Chapter 1. The principal at one school indicated that in 1984-85 about 25% of the children in Homestart had been mainstreamed as a result of their progress.

Principals mentioned several aspects of program impact on parents. They felt that parents developed greater confidence in themselves as teachers of their children. In working with the program, parents' awareness of their role in their child's education was increased, leading to improved student attendance, behavior and achievement. Some principals mentioned having received a lot of feedback from parents about the program with comments like "I wish they'd had this (program) when I was little," or "I want my younger one to be in this program, too." Many principals mentioned demand for services as an indicator of program impact. For example, parents called the school to contact the Homestart aide, for help in interpreting a teacher's note, an assignment, or a report card. In addition, Homestart parents began volunteering to help with field trips or in the classroom, and they asked for books and other literacy materials (e.g. paper and pencils) from the Homestart aide.

Some principals commented that a program weakness was that Homestart "really worked" for only about half of the eligible families. In addition, the impact of Homestart was also diminished by the high mobility rate of this population. Several principals suggested that additional strategies need to be devised to succeed with a higher percentage of target families. Several also expressed concern that limitations in program design affected impact. These will be discussed in the section on program design.

Personnel

All principals expressed the view that the Homestart aide played the pivotal role in making the program succeed. The aide had to be committed, energetic, persevering, and a good communicator. The CLD teacher, and in some cases other teachers, were viewed as important in providing guidance, but the aide needed to energetically pursue the program goals. The position was thought to be a difficult one which most individuals would hold no more than three to five years. The aides had to cope with a lot of depressing experiences such as stories of physcial abuse, and the possibility of being personally endangered. The aide had to deal with some clients who were unfriendly or hostile, who failed to keep appointments or follow-through on assignments. The aide had to maintain a fine balance between remaining committed and energetic, yet not becoming overly involved with the families.

Many principals were critical of the Homestart aide position because it had a low job classification and no job security. One principal called it a "burn-out kind of position" because of the combination of high demand with low pay and lack of security. Several principals also criticized the school district for failing to give some additional kinds of support to the aides. In particular, if an aide's car was vandalized during a home visit, the aide had to bear that expense. At the same time, principals claimed to have been "lucky so far" in finding individuals for these positions. Several principals suggested that the position should be upgraded.

In discussing the Homestart aides, the principals frequently mentioned the necessity for the aide to help the families meet their basic needs. For example, aides frequently served as a source of information to these families about how to apply for financial assistance for food, housing, or utilities. Some principals viewed this function as a necessary first step in creating a connection with some families and as an indication of the school's good faith and commitment to the community. On the other hand, some principals viewed this function as detracting from the primary function of the home visit - that of working with the parent on Homestart tasks. These two views need not be in oppostion, however. One prinicipal stated, "The aide needs to be able to 'read' the family; making time count during the sessions means knowing how to grasp where the family is." Others added that an aide who knew the job could help with basic needs, yet still maintain parent training as the primary focus of the program.

Program Design

The principals were strong in their agreement that parents need to be involved with their children's education, but they were not equally convinced that Homestart or any other program could accomplish this goal for all children. Those who whole-heartedly supported Homestart as at least one means, if not the only means, to this goal cited several problems and suggestions.

The uncertainty of funding from year to year makes it difficult to do meaningful evaluation and planning, especially since the uncertainty often means that good aides leave, thereby creating a lack of program continuity. Proponents of the program argued that Homestart "can't be seen as a limited time fix-up... the people in these communities need parent skills ...this needs to be part of the kindergarten program." Principals repeatedly commented that "the problem is not the type that two to three years of program can fix because the community stays the same," meaning that each year new families come into a school with the same needs as in previous years. These proponents of Homestart argued that the program should be operationally funded. Several added that the Homestart target population needs to be addressed a year earlier, as in a four-year old program, and needs to have services for a longer day, such as 1/2 day kindergarten and 1/2 day CLD throughout the school year. In addition, some kind of home liaison program was suggested for the years after first grade.

However, several of the principals were not convinced that Homestart is the most effective way to spend the limited resources available. One principal argued for the need for a four-year old program, yet stated that most schools probably would not have the space for it. Another pointed out that most of their schools have lengthening waiting lists for students needing Chapter 1 services, and questioned the creation of new programs when "we're already not doing what we're accountable for." The suggestion was made that schools be allowed to make decisions to allocate resources based on district goals rather than the bits and pieces the way it comes from various programs." That is, principals should have more authority in responding to the needs of their school's community, rather than being mandated to implement programs in a specified way by the central administration. Many would like to use funds to lower the pupil-teacher ratio without creating pull-out programs. All principals agreed, however, that regardless of the fate of the Homestart program, the concept of parent involvement needs to be maintained. "Parents need to be involved with their child's life at school."

In summary, the principals agreeded on the need for establishing working relationships with families, and of the need for special outreach efforts to bridge the gap between the school and parents who are uncomfortable communicating with school personnel. In addition, principals shared the view that the program had a positive impact on children's attendance and performance, and was successful at increasing the involvement of many of the parents in their children's education. Principals stressed the pivotal role of the Homestart aides to the success of the program, and many felt that the position had been inadequately supported by central administration. While all principals agreed that parent involvement needs to be a part of school goals, they did not all agree on the means. Some favored an expansion of early education programs, while one principal thought classroom teachers might be able to integrate parent contact into their routine schedule.

Perceptions of Parents

What were parents' thoughts and feelings about the Homestart Program? Their response was critical to the functioning of the program. It was decided that interviews would provide the most meaningful answers to this broad question because an interview allows the respondent to stucture an answer in a personally meaningful way, rather than forcing a choice from a set of prepared answers. At the same time, it was felt that Homestart families would respond better to interviewers with whom they were familiar rather than to a stranger. So Homestart aides and CLD teachers, working in pairs, conducted the interviews of participating families. A training session was provided for all aides and teachers who were chosen to conduct interviews with Homestart families. The training provided familiarity with the objectives of the interview, pitfalls of interviewing and various techniques for successful interviewing. Twenty-six interviews were conducted in the homes of the families by five aide-teacher teams. Families were given a list of questions a week prior to the interview so that they would know what to expect. Responses were recorded by the interviewers. Many interviews were conducted in Spanish, and translated into English.

The purpose of the interviews was to discover the participants' sense of the impact of Homestart. Did it lead to a change in the child's behavior? Did it change the parent-child relationship? Did it create any changes in home activities? Since the program was considered to be "working" for a family if the family maintained its participation, the point of the interviews was to find out <u>how</u> the program was perceived by those for whom it was working.

The interview addressed seven topic areas:

1. how the parent and child spend time together;
2. how the child spends time at home;
3. parents' ideas about teaching the child;
4. parents' feelings about the child's school and teachers;
5. parents' interaction with other children;
6. parents' goals in participating in Homestart; and
7. other comments.

Responses to each topic area were analyzed to determine the range of responses to each question. Then all responses were coded and tabulated. For each topic question a parent typically said several things; therefore, percentages total to more than one hundred percent.

Changes in Parent-Child Interaction

The questions which addressed this area were: Has Homestart affected how you spend time with your child, in comparison to before you joined the program? If so, what effect do you think participating in the program has had on your child this year? Response were grouped into seven categories. Each category is described below and illustrated with a parent's quote. The percentages of responses in each area are presented.

1. The child's motivation for school and/or the child's attitude toward school improved. For example, one parent's comment was, "Now he talks a lot more about everything he does at school. He's more motivated now. He comes home and reads to his younger brother and plays teacher. He gets excited when he thinks he teaches his brother new words" (44%).

2. The Homestart program stimulated more talk and/or improved communication. An example of a parent's response is "I talk more with him now and I know more about what I should do to help him. I ask him questions that need him to answer more than just shaking his head. I communicate better with him" (35%).

3. Parents cited an increase in patience and/or knowledge about how to teach the child. For example: "I've become more patient. I've learned how to work with him and with my other son, too. He needs me to be more patient, and I'm learning that. He talks more now" (35%).

4. The program increased the time that the parent worked with the child and/or increased pleasure in working with the child. One comment was, "We do more meaningful things together. Before she was with me all the time but I never really played or read to her. We are closer in a different way" (60%).

5. Parents cited an increase in children's self-confidence. For example: "The program has helped me and my daughter thinks she can do more now. Before she said school work was too hard" (23%).

6. The Homestart program increased time spent reading and increased interest in reading. For example: "My daughter loves to do her work at home. She reads many books, and now she really reads the words and not just the pictures" (30%).

7. The program decreased the amount of television watched and/or improved the quality of programs viewed. For example: "She used to watch TV all the time, but now she watches Sesame Street and does her work" (20%).

Changes In Children's Activities at Home

The questions which addressed the kinds of activities children were involved in at home were: How does your child spend his/her time? Is there a difference from before you became involved with Homestart?

Six types of responses emerged and are presented below.

1. It was indicated that Homestart children now spend more time asking questions and talking with parents. For example: "She is very curious and asks many questions now. I talk with her a lot more" (12%).

2. Parents said that their children now spend more time with books, express more interest in books, and enjoy making up stories. For example: "She wants me to read to her now, and she really likes books a lot" (84%).

3. Children in Homestart were also reported to engage in Homestart activities by sharing them with other children or by initiating them with a parent. For example: "He tries to teach them and sometimes gets frustrated, but then I talk with him and he tries again. He's more motivated and more involved in activities" (19%).

4. They also now spend more time doing school-type activities and/or playing school. For example: "She used to spend her time playing with Barbies. Now she runs around with paper and pencil asking 'how do you spell this?' or 'what's that'"? (63%).

5. Homestart children now spend time watching better (i.e. more educational) television and/or watching less television. For example: "We are all watching less TV, and now we read together as a family. He wants me to buy more books for him when we go shopping" (40%).

6. Finally, Homestart students were reported to spend more time playing games and in fantasy play. For example: "I notice that he is more creative in playing with his toys" (12%).

Changes in the Parent-as-Teacher Role

A third question addressed the role of the parent as teacher. It was: Have your ideas of how you can teach your child been affected by the program? All but two of the parents responded affirmatively to this question. It was believed by the interviewers that those who responded negatively did not understand the question. Three major changes in this area were reported by parents.

1. Parents indicated they now think it is important to deliberately spend time with their children and to attend to the children's learning. For example: "Now when I cook I call her because I realize it might be a learning experience" (50%).

2. Parents indicated they have come to see the importance of praise and patience, and of being positive, when they work with their children. For example: "I'm more patient when I work with them now. I wanted things done my way; now I know that my children also have ideas and that they enjoy doing things their way" (39%).

3. Parents indicated they have learned how to help their child. For example: "With my first child I really didn't know how to help him. Now I feel more that I know what I should do. I know now what to do when he has trouble with his numbers" (63%).

Changes in Parents' Feelings About the School

Parents were asked: Have your ideas or feelings about the school and your child's teachers been affected by the program?

Nineteen percent of the parents indicated that they had felt comfortable going to the school and talking to teachers before they participated in Homestart. Eighty-one percent indicated that Homestart had made them more at ease about school and made it easier to visit and talk with the child's teacher. For example: "Definitely (my feelings were affected). What encouraged me to come was the CLD program. What interested me even more was the fact they showed the interest enough to come out to my home so I figured I should show more interest in school."

Effect of Homestart on other Family Members

Homestart parents were asked: If you have other children, have your ideas or feelings about your other children's education and home activities been affected by the program?

Twelve percent of the parents said that they have no other children. The remaining 88% of responses addressed four general themes:

1. The parents' ideas about education changed from when the older child was the target child's age, and their interaction with the older child also changed. For example: "We didn't help our older child as much as we are helping M. We didn't know what to do or how. Now we're trying to help the older one too. We used to think we're only the parents, we leave the teaching to the teachers, but now we realize we're teachers too" (42%).

2. The parents focused on the future of a younger child, expressing the plan to work with him/her and/or the hope that the younger child would also be able to participate in Homestart. For example: "My younger son is slower than this one and I know he'll need help because he'll be behind. I want to have him in the program" (20%).

3. The parents indicated they were actively involving their younger child(ren) in the Homestart activities. For example: "The younger ones look forward to the visits and make drawings. They all do the tasks and we now read with all of them. They will be more comfortable at school because of this program" (31%).

4. The parents indicated that homework has become a 'family affair'. For example: "The whole family has set a time and place for homework. That way I can help them both at once. Their dad has learned to work with them too. It's fun, we're a closer family now" (31%).

Achievement of Personal Goals

Parents were asked in interviews: If you set some goals about the program at the beginning of the year, do you feel the program helped you achieve any of those goals? If yes, how?

1. Parents wanted children to become more interested in learning, in going to school, and in reading. For example: "At first my daughter hated school and I feel that Homestart has helped a lot in this. Now she loves school and Homestart has made her feel very important" (42%).

2. Parents wanted to spend more time with the child, to work together, or to read. For example: "I never worked with them before. Everything I do with them now is because of what I learned this year" (40%).

3. Parents wanted to give the child more praise, less pressure, and more patience. For example: "Before I'd get frustrated real easy and now I don't. I can be patient now. Even his father spends more time; he's getting involved. We all have learned to work together" (42%).

4. Parents wanted the child to become less shy, to talk more, to ask more questions. For example: "My goal was for her not to be as shy as she was. She has overcome some shyness. She will answer questions now of other adults. I ask her lots of questions and she's getting better at answering in full sentences" (39%).

Other Reactions to Homestart

At the conclusion of the interviews, parents were asked: Do you have any other comments about the impact of the Homestart program on you, your children, your relationship with them, or your relations with the school? Six types of comments were mentioned by at least 20% of the parents interviewed.

1. The program helped the parents, both in coping with children and in integrating learning with daily activities. For example: "It changed my way of thinking. At first I didn't want her (the Homestart aide) to come because I didn't know how to work with them. But I learned and it's helped me get along with my children and now we work together."

2. The program helped the child to learn more. For example: "I see other kids, nieces and nephews, who are struggling and didn't have this kind of program. I can see the benefit for my child."

3. The program helped the child by improving his/her self-image and/or attitude toward school. For example: "My child waits and is eager for (the Homestart aide) to come. She enjoys it. She's open and has changed a lot. She used to be by herself a lot. Now she hangs around with everybody."

4. The program has helped/will help their younger child(ren). For example: "It helped my son and my other son. Now I'll know how to help my other son and maybe he won't need any help (i.e., special programs) in school."

5. The program brought the family together around books and school activities. For example: "My husband has noticed that her writing, drawing, and assertiveness have improved. Now he even reads to them. He reads three or four books a night."

6. Some parents mentioned the fate of the program. For example: "It has helped me and my child very much. It would be a shame to stop (the program). I would do anything to help it -- even get a petition for parents to sign."

Overall, parents indicated many ways in which the program had a positive effect on their home life. Parents reported that they spent more time with their children engaged in activities associated with school success, such as reading books and talking about experiences and feelings. Children's motivation and interest in school-related activities greatly increased according to the parents and school became a form of play for many of the children. Parents believe they have increased their understanding of their children, as well as their ability to work with them on school-related tasks. Parents' feelings about education in general, and the school in particular, improved and these changes have affected their academic goals for their children.

Perceptions of CLD Teachers

The CLD teachers worked with Homestart children in the CLD classroom each day, and also worked with the Homestart aides. The CLD teacher's work with the Homestart children involved communication with the child's regular classroom teacher and with parents. Each CLD teacher had responsibility for one or two Homestart aides and worked with them in the CLD classroom and in preparing the tasks which were the focus of the aide's visits to the home or in-school visits with parents.

CLD teachers were interviewed in two group sessions. Teachers from the Rio Grande High Cluster were interviewed in one session, while teachers from the Albuquerque High Cluster were interviewed in another session. The teachers were grouped by cluster because of the commonalities within their programs. Albuquerque cluster programs had been operating for more than one year, while Rio cluster programs were all begun in the fall of 1985, and, thus, had been in operation for slightly more than half of a school year. In these group interviews, CLD teachers were asked to discuss what they thought were strengths and weaknesses of the Homestart program, and to offer any suggestions they had for the program.

Strengths of the Program

CLD teachers focused on communication with families as the overriding strength of the Homestart program. They saw Homestart as creating communication with families which would otherwise be almost impossible to reach. They viewed this communication as important in terms of its impact in three areas: 1) the school, 2) the child, and 3) the family. The Homestart Program's provision of improved communication with families impacted the schools in three important ways.

First, parents of Homestart children tend to have had negative experiences in school and are, consequently, reluctant to interact with the school environment. Participation with Homestart helped these parents to be less alienated from the school, and to become more involved with it.

Second, the knowledge acquired by parents often carried into their interactions with the target child's younger siblings, thus serving as a way of promoting the cognitive language development of children at younger and more formative ages, and reducing the likelihood that younger children will need special program services.

Finally, parents learned more about how to communicate with teachers and other school personnel, and how to become more actively involved with their child's life at school.

Increased communication with the family also benefitted the child in a number of ways.

> First, the program provided a way to help parents learn more about child development, for example, to have appropriate expectations of children at different ages; to understand children's emotional, physical and intellectual needs at different ages; to communicate more effectively with children, etc.

Second, through the Homestart aide, knowledge about the home life of the child was acquired which helped the child's classroom teacher to better meet the needs of that child.

Third, increased knowledge about the child often facilitated early identification and referral of the child, for problems such as vision and hearing.

Fourth, the program often provided important continuity for these highly mobile children when they transferred from one school to another, because Homestart personnel could provide information which was usually unavailable to a regular classroom teacher.

The connection between home and school often affected the quality of life for parents and family.

The program often facilitated parents' contact with appropriate agencies and may have helped to develop problem-solving strategies for their stressful circumstances, which could indirectly have a powerful effect on the child's well-being.

In addition, the Homestart program often facilitated the development of relationships among parents, creating vital support systems within the community in place of the prior isolation of many parents.

In their comments on the program, teachers offered the following examples which illustrated parental support of the Homestart program:

- Many parents requested that their child be placed in the program after hearing about the program from other parents.
- Some parents who were in the program often 'passed on' the tasks to friends or relatives who have young children.
- Some parents who 'dropped out' of the program during periods of increased stress returned to the program when conditions improved.
- Some parents who had older children expressed regret that the program did not exist for those older children.
- Some parents developed valuable friendships and support networks with other parents involved in the program.
- Some parents discovered a new attitude about exploring the world with their children.
- Some parents developed coping skills and a new self-confidence which led to seeking employment outside the home for the first time.

Limitations of the Program

CLD teachers identified two areas of program weakness which concern the limits of program effectiveness, and a variety of aspects about the program structure.

First, not all parents who were offered Homestart services through the CLD program actually participated in Homestart. Non-participants were usually the parents of the "neediest" children who had the most stressful, least stable home environments, and who functioned the least effectively in school.

Second, the program structure was viewed as having weaknesses in four areas: planning, supervision, personnel, and supplies. It should be noted that these program weaknesses were mainly the concern of CLD teachers who were involved with programs in the first year of implementation.

In the area of planning, a major concern of CLD teachers was that they were mandated to implement the Homestart program, but were given no opportunity to plan for the program. In addition, they received no training, materials or guidelines with which to work in the initial program year. The increased workload was overwhelming for teachers who did not have exceptional Homestart aides.

In the area of supervision, CLD teachers said they were responsible for performance of the Homestart aides, but had no authority over them, and no involvement in the hiring or evaluation of Homestart aides.

According to the CLD teachers several needs were apparent in the area of personnel:

1. Training for Homestart aides was not adequate; many aides felt ill-prepared to deal with the kinds of problems they encountered in home settings.

2. Hiring of Homestart aides was often unsatisfactory. Adequate hiring guidelines were not created and the special demands of the home visit were not fully recognized by some principals. CLD teachers had no involvement in the selection process. Finally, many aides felt misinformed or ill-informed about the nature of the positon.

3. The level of compensation for Homestart aides was not commensurate with the level of responsibility of the position.

4. There was a very high turnover rate among Homestart aides, attributed primarily to the previous two points, which disrupted program continuity and impeded program development.

5. Procedures for requisitioning supplies were cumbersome and time-consuming. Program tasks sometimes were not implemented due to lack of supplies.

To summarize, CLD teachers saw the program as facilitating a much-needed connection with target families. Parents who otherwise might not have interacted with school personnel were reported to be integrated into the school community and to have acquired greater skill in interacting both with their children and with the school. According to CLD teachers, the program often enabled parents to improve their life situation by giving them the skills and knowledge to deal more effectively with other institutions and agencies, as well as to become more adept at preparing their children to succeed in school. CLD teachers saw the Homestart program as contributing to the impact of the CLD program by facilitating support of their goals at home. At the same time, many of the teachers expressed concern that the families of the neediest children were least likely to participate. At least half of the teachers who worked with new Homestart programs were dissatisfied with some aspects of the program, although similar complaints were not voiced by the teachers who had been with the program longer. However, both sets of teachers agreed that the Homestart aide position was inadequately supported.

Perceptions of Classroom Teachers

A survey of the regular classroom teachers of Homestart students was conducted to discover teachers' reactions to the program. The survey asked the teachers to comment on the impact of the Homestart program. Specifically, the survey asked them to indicate their view of the program's impact - both positive and negative - on 1) the child, 2) his/her family, 3) the classroom teacher, 4) the child's classroom, and 5) other aspects of the school environment. In addition, the survey asked for suggestions that could improve program impact.

The surveys were sent to the principals to distribute to each of the kindergarten and first grade classroom teachers. While it is hypothetically possible to identify exactly how many teachers received that survey (around 80), it is not possible to ascertain how many actually comprised the target population, that is, those teachers who had at least one student participate in the Homestart program. While all kindergarten and first grade teachers probably had at least one student in the CLD program, not all CLD students were offered Homestart services, and of those who were offered the services, some did not participate. Thus, some teachers did not complete the survey because none of their students actively participated in Homestart.

In the 13 schools with Homestart programs, there are at most three kindergartens and three first grade classes per school, yielding potentially 78 classroom teachers involved in Homestart. Surveys were distributed to all of the kindergarten and first grade teachers and a total of 47 questionnaires (60%) was completed and returned. However, the return rate was effectively higher, since not all teachers who received a questionnaire had reason to return it.

Program Effects on the Children

According to classroom teachers, the Homestart program had effects on children in three major areas. The areas and the percent of responses they represented are below:

1. Academic skills and abilities, e.g., "I can see tremendous growth in language development. The children are more alert, and aware of their surroundings. They ask more questions" (15%).

2. Motivational factors and self-concept, e.g., "I saw one child change from an aggressive, disinterested non-reader into a motivated student who began to make rapid progress" (40%).

3. Parent involvement which enhanced school performance, e.g., "The child knows the school and family have contact and the two are not totally unrelated worlds" and "connecting the school and home has been a real help for these children as the parents are able to learn to value learning and participate - the children's school is meaningful then" (19%).

Other comments (14%) mentioned a combination of effects or were non-specific, with comments such as "good" (15%). Two negative responses included, "Has not been as significant as I had initially expected" and "I am not sure. It may be too early to tell."

Program Effects on the Family

Classroom teachers indicated that the Homestart program had effects on the families including:

1. It increased the parents' awareness of their children's needs (35%). Typical comments were: "I've heard many positive comments from parents stating that it helps them as a parent teach their children" and "They wished they'd known earlier what they've learned from the Homestart program" (35%).

2. It increased the parents' awareness of their role in the education of their children, e.g., "Parents seem to feel a greater sense of responsibility for their role in their child's reading development" (emphasis in orginal) (43%).

3. It opened communication between school and family. "They realize that the school cares about their child" (12%).

One negative comment about the impact of the program on the family was "About half of the parents in the program in my classroom do not want the Homestart aide in their homes."

Program Effects on the Classroom Teacher

Classroom teachers cited a variety of effects of the program on themselves:

1. The Homestart aide functioned as a liaison between the classroom and the school (31%)

2. There was a positive carryover from Homestart tasks to general classroom work and routines (30%).

3. The help parents provided at home improved both skills and attitudes of children (16%).

4. Impact was viewed in terms of coordination of activities between regular classroom and Homestart.

5. Impact was viewed non-specifically.

Three negative responses related to the CLD program rather than directly to Homestart. In each case the focus was on the problem of work missed when children are "pulled out" of the classroom for CLD time.

Program Effects on the Classroom

The program had a number of effects on the regular classroom. The effects noted and the percentage of responses are:

1. It improved social skills and self-confidence of participating students which promoted increased classroom participation. Representative comments included: "The children in this program are more able to participate in group activities, thus making the whole classroom work more cooperatively. They are also able to work independently which helps the atmosphere of the classroom" and " The children seem to be more involved in classroom participation. They ask 'richer' and more open-ended questions" (26%).

2. It increased the students' capability for regular classroom work, e.g., "There is a more even distribution of enthusiasm for learning, interest in answering questions, contributions to class discussion than there otherwise might be. The gaps have narrowed, not widened" (44%).

3. It had a positive effect on peers generated by increased enthusiasm, e.g., "Children involved in the program tend to share their enthusiasm for reading with others, creating a snowball effect on other children" (9%).

4. It increased parental follow-up with classroom work, e.g., "The children are bringing homework regularly, and I see a lot of evidence there is real learning going on at home" (12%).

5. It created an interest by non-participating students, e.g., "Other children would love to have home visits" (6%).

6. Impact was viewed non-specifically.

Negative responses related to the CLD pull-out rather than to Homestart. Two teachers referred to difficulty with students missing classroom work, while one teacher indicated that having students return to class during a lesson was slightly disruptive.

Program Effects on the School

The final category to which classroom teachers responded was the effect of the Homestart program on the school. These effects are listed below:

1. It improved the home-school relationship, e.g., "The program helps facilitate communication between home and school - it emphasizes a 'partnership' in the learning process" (35%).

2. It resulted in more extensive parent involvement, e.g., "Parents get more involved with their child's school work" (20%).

3. It was predicted that there would be a change in achievement, e.g., "Long range effect should be higher scores" (20%).

4. It increased contact between classroom teacher, CLD and Homestart staff, e.g.," They (the Homestart aide and the CLD teacher) have been a positive resource for me" (5%).

5. Impact was viewed in non-specific terms.

Two negative responses included the following: "One year isn't enough," and "When kids are gone for so much time at the beginning of first grade it creates problems." It should be noted that the repeated references to CLD pullout (instead of to the Homestart program) were confined to three questionnaires, of the total 47 received.

Suggestions for Improvement

A variety of suggestions were made about ways to improve the impact of the Homestart program. They included recommendations to:

1. Increase the level of services, e.g., for more children, for more home time and from an earlier age (22%).

2. Insure program continuity by improving and securing funding, e.g., use operational funds for program and give some job security (9%).

3. Increase communication between personnel, e.g., between the Homestart aide and the classroom teacher and between Homestart aide, CLD teacher, and classroom teacher (41%).

4. Upgrade the Homestart aide position, e.g., more and better training or higher entry qualifications (14%).

5. Find a way to reach non-participating parents (14%).

In summary, classroom teachers who had direct experience with the Homestart program were highly supportive of the program. Eighty percent of all responses were positive, 5% were negative, and 15% were declines to comment. The relatively high return rate (60%), coupled with the positive nature of the comments, indicated that the results of this survey were a reliable indicator of how most classroom teachers felt about the Homestart program. Overall, they felt that the program helped their neediest students, that it enabled them to do more with the target children and therefore, it raised the general level at which they could conduct instruction. They expressed the belief that parents need to participate in the education of their children and that Homestart was a way to initiate this participation in families where it was not occurring. Almost half of the respondents expressed an interest in working more closely with Homestart personnel as a way to benefit target children both in the classroom and in home visits.

The Secondary School Program

Description of the Home-School Liaison Program

Students in Chapter 1 reading classes at the middle school and high school were potential recipients of Home-School Liaison (HSL) services. Of the six middle and high schools in the Albuquerque High and Rio Grande clusters, HSL's were present in two of the schools - one middle school and one high school. Home School Liaisons addressed the needs of students in Chapter 1 classes who were referred for problems of achievement and attendance by Chapter 1 teachers and others, such as counselors, other classroom teachers, or principals. The HSL staff worked with students and parents to develop a more successful approach to school. For example, HSL's helped parents to become more aware of the importance of doing homework, to develop a system for monitoring the student's homework and schoolwork, and to become aware of the importance of school attendance to maintain enrollment and progress in school.

Thus, as in the elementary program, the goal was to involve parents as partners in their children's education. The HSL could work as a relatively neutral intermediary, in contrast to a teacher or the administrator, between the teacher and the student or parent. The role of the HSL was often to help the student and parent to understand the point of view of a teacher or the administration. Much of the HSL's time was spent contacting students in school and working with them directly. Many of these contacts were formal, in the sense of recorded appointments, while others were informal contacts made during passing periods and breaks--a way of "keeping in touch" with a student who was having problems.

Much of the time the HSL worked with parents, making many contacts through phone and home visits. Often, for example, the HSL made home visits to try to find out why a student was not attending classes or was not completing assignments, and to inform parents about what was occurring at school. When a parent-teacher conference was needed, the HSL was involved in arranging it and was an important participant as well, because he/she was often knowledgeable of the student's functioning in all classes. In a given year, the HSL worked with at least half of the students in the Chapter 1 classes, handling each month a caseload of 60 to 75 students. During the month they made many informal contacts and between 30 and 60 formal contacts such as appointments with students, phone calls to parents, and home visits.

Perceptions of Secondary Principals

Interviews were conducted with principals and assistant principals from the high school and middle school. The interviews were open-ended and unstructured in the sense that direct questions about the program were not asked. As in the elementary principal interviews, principals were asked to identify and comment on what they saw as strengths and weaknesses of the Home-School Liaison Program, and what suggestions they would make to improve the program.

Principals identified a number of advantages of having Home-School Liaison staff. First among these was the flexibility given to the school by having a person who was free to contact parents. Teachers lack the time and access to phones to allow them easy contact with parents by phone. They also said that classroom responsibilities kept teachers from going to the homes of students who don't have phones. Administrators also rarely had the time to make phone or home contact with parents. With the Home-School Liaison program, teachers could make referrals to the HSL staff and problems could be responded to quickly when the teacher first began to notice a pattern of failure to complete assignments or to attend classes. Before liaison staff were available, administrative staff could not keep up with the referrals from teachers about students having schoolwork and attendance problems. Having HSL staff greatly facilitated the referral process. In addition, the HSL staff served as an excellent intermediary with both students and parents. Home-School Liaison staff could effectively mediate because they could carry the message of the instructional or administrative staff, yet have greater rapport with students and with parents.

An important activity of the HSL staff was informing parents about the expectations of teachers and schools. As with parents, of elementary students, some parents of secondary students needed homework assignments to be explained in order to be effective in getting their child to complete homework. The HSL was also instrumental in getting parents to participate in Parent Advisory Council meetings. In addition, parents often sought their help in finding ways to deal with their children. Principals indicated that such communication between home and school is most successful with support personnel such as HSL aides.

Principals indicated that, in their view, the only "weakness" with the Home-School Liaison program was its size. They indicated that there were more Chapter 1 students who needed HSL services, and that there were many students not enrolled in Chapter 1 classes who also needed HSL services. One principal summed up his view of the HSL program by saying, "The aide is the key position in terms of communicating with the home -- there is no other way to be as effective." Principals suggested that the HSL program should be expanded.

Perceptions of Secondary Chapter 1 Teachers

Chapter 1 teachers worked most closely with the HSL program. They were responsible for supervising HSL staff and they made most of the referrals to the Home-School Liaisons. In addition, at the mid-school level the counselor also worked closely with the HSL aide. All Chapter 1 teachers from the middle school and the high school, as well as the mid-school counselor, were interviewed; middle school and high school personnel were interviewed in separate group interviews. As with other groups, these individuals were asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and to offer suggestions for program improvement.

Teachers saw the HSL program as creating a vital link between the home and the school, which cannot be made in any other way. First, since many families did not have a phone, the home visit was the only sure way of making contact. Even for families who did have a phone, the HSL was seen as the most effective contact person because the HSL was not a teacher, was not an administrator, and spoke Spanish. Therefore he or she often could communicate much more effectively with parents. For example, the HSL could start a dialogue with parents about attendance problems and could work with parents to find a solution. Teachers indicated that in many cases a single home visit was all that was needed to solve a problem. However, without the HSL to contact the family there was little chance of solving problems because parents often had no phone, no transportation, or refused to come to the school.

Teachers indicated that in addition to helping solve problems with students, the HSL was an important "conduit" for information. On the one hand, the HSL could gather important information about the student's home situation, which was helpful to teachers. On the other hand, the HSL could convey information from the school to the home. Chapter 1 teachers said they often sent information this way, for example about how to help children learn to read. In addition, the HSL often conveyed information about school regulations, such as differences in attendance policy, which facilitated the transition to high school. Teachers stressed that high school involves a different set of values about attendance which many parents do not understand. These values differ from those appropriate at the middle school level and from the parents' own experiences in high school. One teacher said, "Some kids who would leave school don't drift off" because of the HSL contact with families. The HSL facilitated the flow of information between teachers and administration, as well as between school and home. The HSL was also a person who was available to the parents, a person that parents often turned to when they sought help in dealing with their child or with the school.

Finally, there were a number of ways the HSL directly benefitted students. The HSL often worked with a student to help meet basic needs in the area of food, health, and clothing, such as making arrangements to obtain prescription glasses. The HSL sometimes worked in the area of personal problems, attempting to prevent conflicts or to promote awareness about conflict situations. In addition, the HSL was sometimes a 'counseling mediator,' working as a student advocate to help a student who had been inappropriately placed.

All teachers interviewed saw the HSL as critical to succeeding with the kinds of problems they faced. They expressed frustration that there were not enough HLS personnel, and that the compensation for the HSL was not commensurate with their responsibilities. One teacher said, "The bottom line is 'do we want to keep kids in school?' From that point of view, this program pays for itself."

At the middle school, the Chapter 1 teachers had conducted surveys of other teachers and of Chapter 1 parents. In their survey, parents were asked how they felt about the Homevisit program. Ninety-three percent of the respondents said they liked having home visits. On the teacher survey, all teachers indicated strong support of the HSL program. One response was typical of most: "Contact with the homes of our students is of the utmost importance because extenuating circumstances are frequently the cause of poor learning habits and can only be rectified with parent involvement."

To summarize, all personnel interviewed at the secondary level expressed the view that the HSL program provided a vital link with the family which could not be accomplished in any other way. Administrators saw this link in terms of being able to respond to teachers' referrals about students who are having homework and attendance problems. Teachers saw the liaison personnel as the only effective way to make contact with many parents and to involve those parents in their children's learning. In addition, both groups saw the HSL aides as a resource available to parents and students for solving a variety of problems which were either directly or indirectly related to students' experience in school. A number of secondary personnel suggested that the HSL aide was the key person for keeping many students in school.

Summary and Conclusions

The aim of this evaluation was to determine the effects of a home visitation program on parental involvement in the education of their children. Each of the groups surveyed or interviewed saw the program from a slightly different perspective but there was widespread agreement in several areas.

First, all school personnel interviewed agreed on the need for establishing contact with families and encouraging parent involvement and saw this not as a frill or an extra service, but as an essential ingredient in addressing the educational needs of the students in these schools.

Second, elementary school personnel expressed the opinion that the Homestart program was successful in increasing the involvement of many of the parents in their children's education. CLD teachers indicated that parents had been integrated into the school community and had acquired greater skill in interacting both with their children and with the school. Parents reported that after participating in the program they were better able to work with their children on school-related tasks and spent more time than they had previously engaged in activities with their children, like reading books. They also said they spent more time talking about their children's experiences and feelings and believe they now understand their children better. Parents also indicated that their feelings about education, in general, and their children's school, in particular, have improved and that these changes have affected their academic goals for their children.

Third, elementary principals reported that the Homestart program had a positive impact on children's attendance and performance at school. The classroom teachers of participating elementary students substantiated this. They believed that the program helped their neediest students and thereby made it possible to raise the level at which they conducted classroom instruction. The parents of these children also reported an increase in their children's motivation and interest in school-related activities.

Fourth, secondary school personnel expressed the opinion that the program provided a vital link with the family which could not be accomplished in any other way. Besides dealing with homework and attendance problems, the aides were able to help solve a variety of problems which were directly or indirectly related to students' experiences in school.

Fifth, it was believed by school personnel that because of the aides' knowledge of the community they were best able to establish the rapport, trust, and respect necessary for a home visitation program to succeed. However, school personnel expressed concern about the classification of the position. They believed that because of the level of responsibility and expertise the postion entails, the position should be upgraded.

Sixth , elementary personnel believed that additional ways should be found to address the more pressing survival issues of the neediest families so that these parents will be able to focus on the educational needs of their children. They commented that families of the neediest children were least likely to participate.

Seventh, there was widespread agreement among those interviewed and surveyed that home visitation programs need to be expanded in order to serve many students who were not being served.

Finally, it is important to point out that midway through the evaluation, it was decided that the Homestart program would no longer be funded unless schools chose to use part of their Chapter 1 allocations in this way. In the interviews that were conducted before the announcements, although the interviewer never raised the question of funding, a number of principals stated that they were committed to maintaining the home visitation program and personnel regardless of budget problems. In interviews that followed the announcement, some principals indicated that they would reassign other personnel in order to maintain home contact services, while others expressed discouragement over losing the programs. Many teachers expressed frustration about this change in funding for the Homestart program and commented on the irony of cutting funds from programs aimed at preventing costlier problems that might occur in the future.

Even at the beginning of the period of data collection, there was a great deal of discussion about budget cuts. Such concerns naturally affect what individuals write on a survey or say to an interviewer about a program. Nonetheless, it should be noted that no one who participated in the evaluation was personally threatened with loss of job if the program was cut. It would seem that the widespread support of the program can be seen as a genuine representation of all points of view.

Current APS policy insures that staff members, including the project leader, will review the data and findings contained in the report. A plan which includes appropriate steps to address identified program needs will be implemented.

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